



United States Air Force

Air Force Materiel Command

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FACT SHEET

Installation Restoration Program

Introduction

Eglin Air Force Base is the largest forested air base in the western world, covering almost a half million acres of land and coastline. In this setting, Eglin conducts its primary mission, national defense, through operational testing of combat systems and training exercises.

Eglin's operations produce by-products that have contaminated specific sites at Eglin over the years. For example, spills of jet fuel occurred during storage and transfer operations. Contamination also resulted from the storage, maintenance, and shipping of weapons; waste disposal; research and development activities; and aircraft operations. While Eglin personnel complied with industrial standards and exceeded legal requirements then in place, it is now clear that some practices were inadequate in preventing contamination. Practices are now much improved and actions have been taken to prevent and control further contamination.

Studies confirm that contamination is confined to the base. As a result, the general public is not exposed to hazardous wastes from Eglin.

Installation Restoration Program

In 1980, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) issued guidelines to investigate and clean up wastes from past operations at military installations worldwide. Subsequently, the Air Force began investigating its bases under the DoD's Installation Restoration Program (IRP). The fundamental goal of the program is to protect human health and the environment.

Eglin was one of the first five Air Force bases to start an ongoing investigation and cleanup of its former waste disposal and spill sites. Funded by the Defense Environmental Restoration Account, the IRP program at Eglin is conducted under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976 (RCRA). This law guides management, disposal, and cleanup of hazardous materials throughout the nation. Personnel at Eglin also comply with state environmental compliance programs. Due to jet fuel spills, Florida's Petroleum Contamination Site Cleanup Criteria are especially important.

Challenges

To ensure the most efficient and cost-effective results, the Air Force prioritized cleanup, focusing first on sites with greater potential risk to human health or the environment. Eglin's commitment to the surrounding communities is evident through their Public Involvement Plan, which follows federal DoD/U.S. Environmental

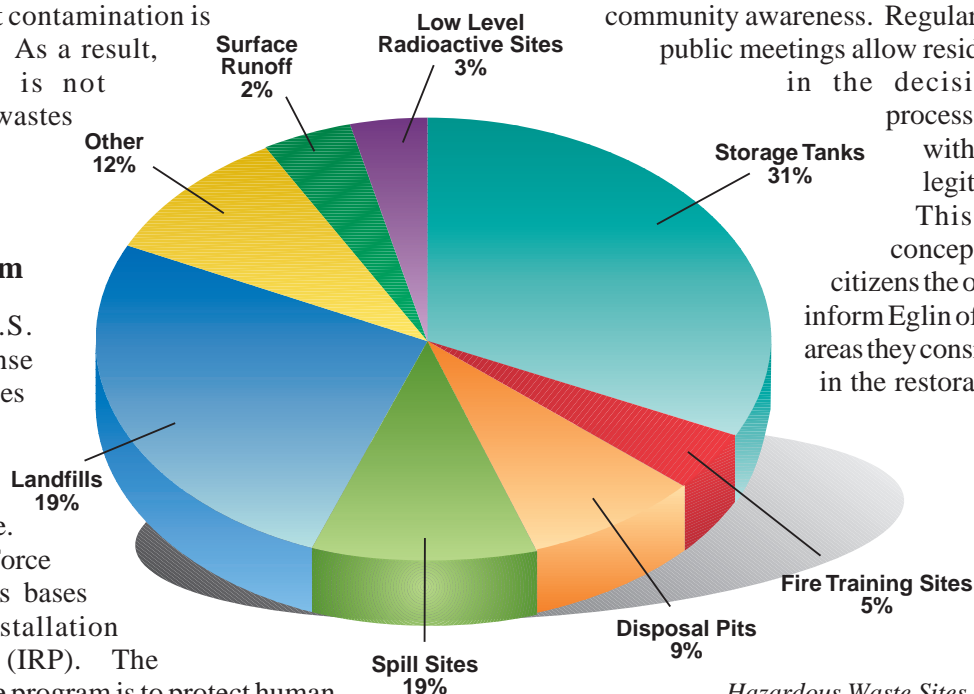
Protection Agency guidance to help foster community awareness. Regularly scheduled public meetings allow residents to share

in the decision making process as "partners"

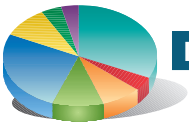
with Eglin, in a legitimate forum.

This partnering concept gives local

citizens the opportunity to inform Eglin officials on the areas they consider priorities in the restoration process.



*Hazardous Waste Sites at Eglin
(Shown as fraction of total sites)*



Eglin representatives encourage consideration of relative risk in reaching consensus on future priorities and annual budget requests. Future funding is expected to become even more of a concern, and, while most of Eglin's IRP sites are still in a study phase, cleanup requires more funding than the studies do. From 1992 through 1996, annual funding ranged from \$1.2 - \$12 million. Eglin has spent or committed more than \$27 million since its restoration program began in 1981.

Progress and Types of Sites at Eglin

Despite challenges, Eglin has made substantial progress. In 1996, 48 of the 91 sites are in the RCRA corrective action process. This process includes:

- ï an initial site investigation
- ï a detailed site investigation if contamination is found
- ï an assessment of possible remedies
- ï implementation of a chosen remedy

Following successful implementation, a No Further Action Decision document is prepared in coordination with regulators.

Because much of what the Air Force does is similar to the rest of America's industrial complex, many of the types of cleanup sites are very similar to those most American communities are actively remediating.

Landfills are a common remediation problem throughout America. Industrial and maintenance operations that are currently regulated by state, federal and Air Force guidelines were not so strictly managed in the past. Until relatively recently, burial of domestic and hazardous waste in the same landfill was the accepted standard of disposal. Two of Eglin's landfills are currently being remediated by Okaloosa County, while being monitored by the Eglin IRP staff.

Spill sites on Eglin parallels the Air Force average. The vast majority of Eglin's spill sites are related to storing and transferring jet fuels.

Disposal pits here tend to be the result of indiscriminate disposal of hardfill such as plastics, drums, construction debris and concrete. Hazardous materials such as waste oil or solvents may be found in these disposal pits.

Fire training areas were used for the training of fire protection personnel. To start the fires, waste fuels, oils,

solvents and contaminated fuels were sprayed onto mock buildings, cars, planes and other equipment to realistically recreate a training environment. Sometimes, the chemicals would soak into the soil.

Underground storage tanks comprise the bulk of Eglin's cleanup sites. These tanks stored a variety of fluids, including jet fuel, auto fuel and waste oil. As the tanks are identified and assessed, those producing the greatest risk are scheduled for removal first.

Surface runoff sites are usually the result of malfunctioning equipment or improper maintenance practices. In Eglin's case, an inoperative oil-water separator and formerly acceptable motor pool practices resulted in two IRP sites currently in varying states of assessment.

Low-level radioactive sites at Eglin have either depleted uranium or magnesium thorium as a result of munitions testing.

Other sites include possible contamination from an herbicide test program more than 25 years ago.

In addition to studying and cleaning sites, Eglin has pioneered new ways to clean contaminated sites. Some of these methods use natural biological processes to remove contaminants or change their form to safe substances. For example, microbes can digest jet fuel, producing carbon dioxide, water and more microbes.

Public Involvement

Eglin benefits from programs that involve citizens and local officials. For example, public hearings, meetings, and comment periods enable Eglin staff to explain programs and allow citizens an opportunity to ask questions or express concerns. Six citizens are on the Restoration Advisory Committee. Information fairs, tours, fact sheets, news releases, and technical reports offer information about IRP activities. Information repositories located in Fort Walton Beach and Niceville and on base offer documents and other resources.

Eglin's environmental concerns focus on protecting human health and the environment. Public concerns are similar, centering around maintaining a clean water supply above and below the ground. The primary challenge for the future is to build on the significant progress already made, to focus available resources on the most serious problems, and to prevent further contamination.

